

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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R 270414Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2262
INFO HQ DEA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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BANGKOK FOR RD ADDARIO
JAKARTA FOR SAIC SHOAF
KUALA LUMPUR FOR SAIC POWERS
MANILA FOR SAIC GREENE
SINGAPORE FOR SAIC BROWN

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: SNAR, AS, US
SUBJECT: REGISTRATION OF AIRCRAFT USED BY DONALD ROY TAIT AND SOME
DETAILS OF CAPER

REF: CANBERRA 0626

1. ACCORDING TO AUSTRALIAN NARCOTICS BUREAU (ANB), AIRCRAFT
USED BY DONALD ROY TAIT WAS AERO COMMANDER MODEL 680E
BEARING U.S. REGISTRATION NUMBER N-1935W. IT NOT KNOWN
WHETHER AIRCRAFT ALSO REGISTERED ELSEWHERE. ANB TOLD
EMBOFF THAT AIRCRAFT BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN PURCHASED IN
NOVEMBER 1977 FROM O'HARA AND KENDALL, SAN JUAN, CALIFORNIA
BY PETER JONES, A.K.A. DONALD TAIT. FUSELAGE OF AIRCRAFT
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BORE LETTERING "LORAN RESEARCH, INC."

2. AIRCRAFT THOUGHT TO HAVE DEPARTED FROM BRUNEI ON MORNING
OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 22 UNDER CLAIMED LONG DISTANCE ROUND-
TRIP, NO OTHER LANDING FLIGHT PLAN WITH STATED PURPOSE OF
TESTING NAVIGATIONAL EQUIPMENT. ALTHOUGH AUSTRALIAN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT SEEKING ADDITIONAL DETAILS ITS OWN CHANNELS,

EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION SAIC POWERS OR EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR MAY BE ABLE OBTAIN RE AIRCRAFT AND ITS FLIGHT PLAN WITHOUT AT THIS POINT GOING TO UNNECESSARY EFFORT. AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT CHECKING WITH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT RE REGISTRATION DETAILS AND PRESUMABLY WITH MALAYSIAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT RE AIRCRAFT'S ACTIVITIES IN MALAYSIA.

3. HARVEY BATES HAS TOLD US THAT ANB GOT INTELLIGENCE ABOUT 10 DAYS PRIOR TO FLIGHT THAT IT WOULD BE MADE TO AREA OF KATHERINE IN NORTHERN TERRITORY AND SET TRAP FOR AERO COMMANDER AND ITS GROUND CONTACTS. ACCORDING TO PRESS (AND RATHER SHEEPISHLY ADMITTED BY HARVEY BATES) TRAP MIGHT HAVE FAILED WHEN RAAF IN DARWIN (WHICH ANB HAD NOT INFORMED) SPOTTED AIRCRAFT ON RADAR AND DIVERTED C-130(SIC) WHICH HAPPENED TO BE FLYING IN AREA TO INTERCEPT AERO COMMANDER AND ATTEMPT GET IT LAND AT DARWIN. AERO COMMANDER REFUSED FOLLOW C-130'S INSTRUCTIONS AND ATTEMPTED EVASIVE ACTION. C-130 FINALLY FORCED BREAK OFF CONTACT AND RETURN DARWIN DUE LACK OF FUEL. AERO COMMANDER APPARENTLY ALSO SHORT OF FUEL AND ATTEMPTED LANDING IN Paddock NEAR KATHERINE. PILOT THEN SET FIRE TO AIRCRAFT AND FLED INTO BRUSH.

4. POLICE SUBSEQUENTLY ARRESTED ANTHONY WILLIAM SCOTT, 24, OF NEW ZEALAND, ON CHARGES OF GIVING A FALSE NAME AND BEING CONCERNED WITH IMPORTATION OF CANNABIS; PETER MCNAMARA, 35, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF BYRON BAY, NEW SOUTH WALES, CHARGED WITH POSSESSING HASHISH AND BEING CONCERNED IN THE IMPORTATION OF CANNABIS; MICHAEL BARTLEY, 20, OF KATHERINE, NORTHERN TERRITORY, CHARGED WITH GIVING A FALSE NAME (BARTLEY MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN CO-PILOT OR PASSENGER IN AIRCRAFT). TAIT EVADED POLICE FOR MORE THAN TWO DAYS DESPITE A MASSIVE MANHUNT, BUT WAS FINALLY CAPTURED ON JANUARY 24. TAIT WAS ARRESTED ON A NORTHERN TERRITORY PROVISIONAL WARRANT, TIED TO A NEW SOUTH WALES WARRANT FOR FAILING TO ANSWER BAIL ON A FRAUD CHARGE. HARVEY BATES TOLD EMBOFF THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY OF TWO MORE ARRESTS, ALTHOUGH HE NAMED NO NAMES.

5. ACCORDING TO H. BATES THE AIRCRAFT WAS CARRYING ABOUT 150 KG OF BUDDAH STICKS ABOUT ABOUT A DOLS ONE-HALF MILLION, ALTHOUGH A QUANTITY WAS DESTROYED IN THE FIRE. ALSTON

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